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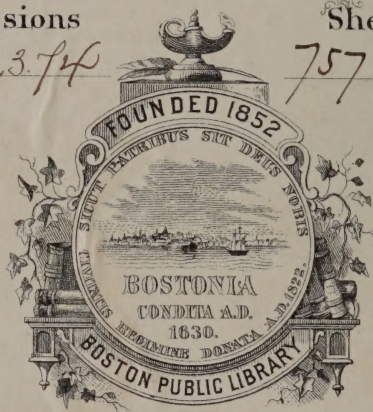
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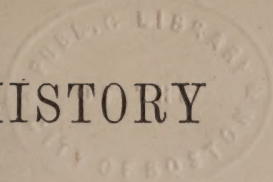
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BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE

LADIES' AUXILIARY

Penitent Females' Refuge Society.



BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE

RISE AND PROGRESS

OF THE

PENITENT FEMALES' REFUGE,

INSTITUTED JAN. 12, 1825.

BOSTON:

WILLIAM D. TICKNOR & COMPANY.

MDCCC XLIX.

OFFICERS AND MANAGERS.

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" NORMAN SEAVER, *V. President*.
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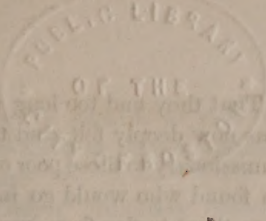
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B.H.

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Apr. 23. 1889



HISTORY.

THE friends of this Institution, when soliciting subscriptions, are frequently asked for information of its origin, and for facts to prove the utility of its existence. In consequence of which, and with a desire to awaken more interest in the hearts of our christian ladies in these obscure charities, it was voted by the Ladies' Society, Auxiliary to the P. F. R. Society, that a brief history be prepared.

A "Female Society for Missionary Purposes" had long existed in our city. After devoting their funds, for many years, to foreign and domestic missions, they began to reflect on the duty and necessity of sending the purifying light of Revelation into the darkened and vicious places in our own city.

Deep commiseration was awakened in the hearts of the heavenly-minded and the appeal made, shall we be solacing ourselves with the present comforts of religion, and the blessed hope of heaven, or be contented with sending the gospel to the heathen, and to the waste places in our own land, while darkness worse than heathen is reigning in some of the streets in our very midst, and souls daily going down to death, without hope, having no knowledge of God? And shall no eye pity them, and no hand be extended for their salvation?

That they had too long slumbered over these miseries, was now deeply felt, and the design was formed to send a missionary to these poor outcasts, if one Christ-like could be found who would go into these highways of sin, and urge them to flee from impending ruin.

The missionary was, at length, obtained, and his labors commenced. And now, the necessity of an asylum was fully realized, where those, convinced of their guilt and danger, and wishing to reform, might flee for refuge; for how, in these abodes of iniquity, could penitent feelings take a deep hold of the heart, and terminate in renovation of life? And whither could they go, having closed after them every door to reputable society? Deep solicitude was felt on the subject. Counsel and co-operation were sought from the fathers and brethren in the church, but in vain, it being their opinion, that the obstacles to such an institution were insuperable.

The Society appropriated days to fasting and prayer, many tears were shed, and many prayers were offered, and they were not in vain. In 1821 some gentlemen with christian philanthropy, associated together, and with limited means, and under many disadvantages, formed the Penitent Females' Refuge Society. Notwithstanding the disadvantages, good was effected, and the blessing of heaven was manifest upon these first efforts. There were instances of reformation, and some cases of entire renovation, while this institution was in its infancy. These encouraged the more doubtful, but not less benevolent, to enlist their influence and property in these unpopular charities. At length property, piety, and talent were combined, and the success, after the lapse of years, was greater than had been anticipated.

The Directors, from the commencement of their efforts, requested the appointment of a committee from the

Female Missionary Society, before named, to visit the house weekly, and promote the interests of the establishment by counsel and instruction.

From this originated the Ladies' Auxiliary Society, formed in 1825, from the funds of which, they have clothed the inmates of the Refuge, met other expenses, and paid over the remainder to the gentlemen's society.

It has been the aim of the directors and superintendents to govern the inmates as children in the best managed families are governed, or to do this as nearly as circumstances will permit. To throw around them the influence of kindness has the happiest effect in exciting their love and gratitude, and securing their respect and obedience.

Cheerfulness, sympathy and affection, have uniformly marked the conduct of the superintendents, in all their intercourse with the inmates. In this, as in other families, different dispositions require different treatment; with some, mild persuasion answers best; with others, a decided word will have more influence than the most powerful arguments; unyielding firmness is always necessary.

Some of the results of these efforts and labors of love we will now produce, selecting only a few from the many cases in which the benefits of the Institution have been experienced. First, we will prove that such characters may become good domestics. One of the first received, after remaining a suitable time in the Institution, her conduct being uniformly good, was recommended to a respectable family in a country village. It is sufficient commendation of her to say, that there she remained *five years*, and in another family where the labors were less arduous, two years. She has lived in other places, giving equal satisfaction. She has money in the Savings Bank, and pays an annual subscription for the support of the

Refuge, which she esteems a most endeared home. Her annual and semi-annual visits to it are among her choicest comforts. She is now hopefully pious, and her gratitude for the benefits received is unbounded.

Another came to the Refuge in a degraded state, and earnestly begged admittance. After remaining there the appointed time, her conduct, distinguished by disinterested labors, and efforts to benefit the Institution, she was placed at service by the Directors, and such has been her industry and entire good behaviour, that she has brought from time to time, upwards of *two hundred dollars*, to be placed for her in the Savings Bank, which she had saved from her weekly wages, besides clothing herself, and paying an annual subscription to the Auxiliary Society. Her gratitude is ardent, and her attachment to the family very strong. She seldom visits them without bringing some little presents ; and this is a practice not peculiar to this individual, several having manifested their attachment in a similar way. One of the reformed ones, while at service, bought a new dress for one who had recently entered, and for whose rescue she had been especially anxious, for the purpose, she said, of encouraging her to persevere in her efforts for a new life.

We might multiply accounts like the above, but our limits forbid. Who would not contribute to promote such results ?

From the number of those, who it is believed, have derived spiritual blessings from this Institution, we will select a few cases. S. K. was one of the most degraded. For some misdemeanor she was confined in the House of Correction. While there, she heard, for the first time, of the religion of the Bible, from the weekly visitants, by one of whom she was induced to go to the Refuge when her imprisonment expired. She was, at first, discon-

tented. The change in her situation was very great. Her temper, which was violent, had never been under the least control. She was ignorant ; could neither read nor write. A dissolute mother had hastened her ruin. Now, with excited sympathies, behold this lost one sitting beside her compassionate teacher, first learning the alphabet, at length able to read in the Bible of the blessed God who made her and gave her an immortal soul. Behold her now, with new feelings, seeking earnestly the salvation of her soul, of the very existence of which, but a few months before, she was confessedly ignorant. She became deeply sensible of her sinfulness ; at length, it was hoped she believed in Him who died to save sinners. She gave the best evidence of a radical change, by living a religious life. At a suitable time she was placed at service in a religious family in the country, where her penitence and her hopes were to be tested. There she gave great satisfaction. Her temper, from which most was feared, seemed entirely under control. After some months had passed she was attacked with fever, of which she died, — her death sincerely lamented by those with whom she lived. The gentleman remarked to the Superintendent, that so good help they never expected to have again. — Who regrets their contributions to the Refuge ? — but for which, she said, there was no way for her escape from destruction.

We will mention another instance, which we select for its peculiar features, to show the necessity of a House of Refuge. The mother of this individual, with connexions of the first respectability, in one of the British Provinces, eloped from her husband and children, taking with her this daughter then a little child. In this city she resided several years with him who accompanied her, their appearance being respectable. At length poverty came

upon them, and this daughter was placed at service — but with what prospect of success, trained by such a parent? After some months she returned to her mother, who was then living among the immoral and degraded; and so rapid was the downward course of this poor unfortunate girl, that, at her mother's death, which occurred a few months after, she was found, by the city missionary, so intoxicated she could not attend the funeral. The missionary, knowing the circumstances, commiserated her state, and sought admission for her at the Refuge, as the only way for her rescue. She was received; and there was an immediate change in her. Her improvement was surprisingly rapid. She was soon transformed in her external appearance, as well as in her moral features. "During the time she was here," say the superintendents, "we never had occasion once to reprove her." It was her constant effort to do every thing to please them; and she excelled all others in her watchful care of the inmates; especially would she advise and watch over the newly entered; there was something maternal in her care of them; so disinterested, that she feared not to risk their favor, when their good required it, and yet every one loved her, her benevolence was so manifest. She accomplished a vast deal of work, and, in her own time, read many volumes belonging to the Society. No effort was too great to show her ardent love to the Superintendents. To the missionary, by whom she was found and brought to the Refuge, her gratitude was unbounded. Being sent for by her relatives she very reluctantly left this loved home, but for which, she said, she must have been in a miserable eternity. She was restored to her station as sister in her family, and her conduct soon won their esteem and affection.

Many of our friends and patrons may already be acquainted with the preceding facts, but we deemed it important that they should form a part of the present brief history, which is designed as a sketch, though a very limited one, of the commencement, and the progress up to the present time of this Society's efforts, and the results, so far as they have come under our knowledge, not designing to interfere with the gentlemen's records or reports. Many changes of character have been witnessed in later years as marked and as permanent as those already mentioned; but the limits prescribed will only admit of the insertion of one or two other accounts.

We select one as worthy of special note, from the striking contrast between her former and her present character. When first received at the Refuge she expressed a strong desire for improvement, but her habit of yielding to a very bad temper was so fixed, it was feared no permanent good would ever come of her being there; but patience and prayer and reiterated instructions were persevered in, notwithstanding the fearful bursts of passion which occasionally almost annihilated hope. After a long time, religious instructions, especially preaching on the Sabbath, began to affect her mind, and control her conduct. But the conflict was very severe, though it was hoped, eventually successful through the power of the Holy Spirit. When she was placed at service in a distant town, most was feared from this strong enemy her temper; but after remaining in the minister's family, where she was first placed, more than a year and a half, their testimony was that she was the best help they had ever had. When on her first visit to the Refuge, she was asked by the Secretary, how it was she had so governed her temper, which had formerly troubled her so much, she replied, "When I am tempted I pray — 'Lord keep me,' — and in

this way I am saved from its power. The test of years has now been added ; she not only renders herself very useful in the family with whom she has long lived, being most conscientiously faithful to their interests, but is a devoted christian in the church she has joined. Her letters to the superintendents are expressive of the most ardent gratitude. In one of them, she says, "To you, under God, I owe my standing in society, yea, my very life, and also, my blessed hope of immortality. Why, the mercies I have received are enough to sink me into the depths of gratitude." At another time, when speaking in the most humble and grateful manner of the kindness received from the family with whom she lived during severe illness, she adds, "but it is to my dear Refuge friends I *owe all*—I cannot express my gratitude to them—but the Lord will bless and reward them." The same allusions to her salvation, by means of the Refuge, are contained in the many letters received in the years that have passed ; her uniform, unexceptionable life giving force to these expressions. Is this "an expensive charity ?" A soul is of priceless value.

We only add a few items of one other case. M. M. from her first being at the Refuge, was attentive to all the instructions given either by conversation or preaching. Indeed she had gone there with strong desires for improvement. She was very ignorant ; could neither read nor write. But by constant pains-taking she soon learned to read, and then she *studied* the Bible. In conversation with the Secretary, she said, "When I first heard Mr. H. preach at the Refuge I could understand him, his words went right to my heart. I felt that I must live differently, but did not know what to do. I used to go away and pray that God would enlighten me, and give me wisdom from above, that I might know His will and do it." She

said she refrained from speaking unkindly, when so spoken to by the inmates, and from idle words and thoughts, because she knew if she continued to sin God would not answer her prayers. Persevering in this course, we are not surprised that she soon cherished the hopes of a christian, and gave evidence of a radical change. Reading the Bible and prayer were her choicest comforts. She said, before she came to the Refuge, she knew nothing of the Bible—did not know she must repent of sin; said the Catholic priest had told her to do penance, and then her sins were forgiven, and she need have no more trouble about them. “I never can be thankful enough,” she added, “that I ever came to the Refuge; my gratitude for the kindness of the superintendents, I cannot express.” We have been more particular in this statement, because her subsequent life was so entirely consistent with her professions. She was really an assistant to the superintendents by her influence over the family. She was eventually placed at service in a minister’s family, where she remained till obliged to leave in consequence of protracted illness.

The opinion of this clergyman, Rev. Mr. O., concerning her, was given by him, at a late annual meeting. He said he had been interested in the Society from the character of this domestic. He spoke of her correct deportment, entire faithfulness in his family, and decided christian character; also of her patience under severe protracted suffering, her peace of mind and firm hope in death. Such facts, and such testimony, speak volumes in favour of the Refuge.

A few years since, the funds became so low that many doubted whether the Refuge could be longer sustained; this was a crisis of painful anxiety to its friends. It really seemed to them like closing the only avenue through

which this fallen class of humanity could be effectually reached, and guided into the way of life.

Other plans had been devised by christian charity, less complicated and expensive, but experience had proved the necessity of the healthful discipline, the moral culture, and the *strict seclusion* of the Refuge.

At this crisis of anxiety mercies were asked of the God of Heaven, and divine guidance implored. The friends of the Institution, gentlemen and ladies, with christian zeal and firmness of purpose, came up to its help, resolving that they never would cease their efforts till it was resuscitated and fixed on a firm basis. The Lord prospered them. Such ample donations were made as warranted the erection of the present house with all its accommodations; the land having been given by the city government. The Institution is now fixed on a firmer basis than ever before, but donations and subscriptions are still necessary to aid in its support. The house was completed and dedicated in Dec., 1845.

The advantages for intellectual improvement are very considerable. The inmates are instructed in the common branches of education, of which, most of them are ignorant when they enter. The salutary effect of these instructions must be apparent to all. The mind becomes occupied by them, and moral healthfulness is promoted.

Among the means for the improvement of the inmates, are the visits of the Committee from the Ladies' Society. They encourage those who are trying to do well, give advice on various subjects, and impart religious instruction.

They have a Bible class, or meeting for religious instruction, one evening every week, and on the Sabbath, preaching half the day and Bible class instruction.

The inmates are instructed in the various kinds of

household work ; the object being to prepare them for useful employment. They are also taught plain sewing, and the thoroughness of their teaching can be attested to by the many ladies who have furnished work for them. The amount of work performed is more than could be expected. The industry of the inmates cannot be exceeded by that of any private family. This must be attributed to the untiring efforts and judicious management of the superintendents. In no institution, we are inclined to think, is it so necessary to its success, that those who guide and control its arrangements be guided and controlled themselves by a self-sacrificing christian spirit ; with such Superintendents, Heaven has blessed the Refuge from its commencement.

We have alluded to the necessity for such an asylum as the Refuge. Restraint is necessary to those accustomed to do evil, till reason and principle gain the ascendancy. Time is required for having the mind and heart so influenced by religious truth as to strengthen the individual against temptation. This class have placed a barrier between themselves and the moral part of the community ; hence the necessity of a probation in the Refuge, where they are excluded from former associates and influences — new habits formed — their minds improved, and best affections cultivated. Then they are prepared for useful employment in families, without endangering the morals of others.

But we may add here, that those who know most upon the subject of reform, as connected with this Society, place their hopes of ultimate success, upon the power of spiritual religion. When this reaches the heart it does wonderfully transform. This influence was specially manifest some years ago at the former House of Refuge.

We may be thought extravagant, but we only testify

that we have seen. We were indeed surprised at the transformation of character which then took place—the indolent so soon becoming industrious, the slothful excelling in early rising, and efficiency, and the bad tempered and self-willed, distinguished for their docility and disinterested kindness. And we were convinced that spiritual influences accompanying christian effort, only could have effected such mighty changes.

But the question may be asked, have instructions been alike successful on all those who have come within their influence? We answer, they have not. While many have been benefited for this life and the life to come; others have turned away from them preferring evil to good, and darkness to light. Thus, the darker shades are blended with the bright, in these labors of mercy. But should this deter from further effort? What christian or philanthropic enterprise ever went forward in our world meeting with no discouragements? For such success we should wait in vain. . . . This Society was formed in compliance with the precepts of *His* gospel who came into the world to seek and save the lost.

The first movers in this charity were holy women of fervent prayer. Believing in the efficacy of such piety and prayer, our thoughts revert to them in connection with the signal blessings God has granted this Institution. While many of them have gone to their reward, others are raised up to carry forward this Ark of Safety. . . . To the guidance and blessing of Heaven, we still commend all its arrangements and interests.

Written in accordance with a vote of the Society,
BY THE SECRETARY.

Nov., 1848.

CONSTITUTION OF THE AUXILIARY SOCIETY

TO THE

PENITENT FEMALES' REFUGE SOCIETY.

INSTITUTED JAN. 12, 1825.

ARTICLE 1. — This Association shall be called, The Auxiliary Society to the Penitent Females' Refuge Society.

ART. 2. — The annual payment of One Dollar shall constitute membership; and a payment of 25 dollars at one time, life membership.

ART. 3. — The funds of the Society shall be appropriated to aid the parent Society, in such manner as the officers and board may direct.

ART. 4. — The Officers shall be a President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary, with a Board of Twelve Managers.

ART. 5. — It shall be the duty of the President to preside at the meetings of the Society and Board, and to call special meetings, as occasion may require. In the absence of the President, these duties shall devolve on the Vice President.

ART. 6. — It shall be the duty of the Secretary to take minutes at the quarterly meetings, and keep a record of the same; also to notify the meetings of the Board and Society, making a report of the transactions of the Board and state of the Refuge at the annual meeting.

ART. 7. — It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to take charge of the funds of the Society, keep a record of all the receipts and disbursements, and annually submit her accounts, together with her vouchers, to an auditing committee. No money shall be drawn from the treasury without an order from the President. The Treasurer shall keep a list of the subscribers' and donors' names.

ART. 8. — The Board of Managers shall be divided, at the annual meeting, into committees of two each, whose duty shall be to visit the Refuge once a week for two months; to inspect the work, and devise means for the constant employment of the inmates, to inquire into their conduct, and converse and pray with them, encouraging such as have conducted well, and reproving those who have behaved with impropriety. This committee shall examine the regulations of the house, recommending to the matron any improvement which they judge proper. It shall also be the duty of this committee, at the end of their term, to present a brief report to the Board, at the quarterly meeting, of the state of the Refuge, suggesting any improvement that may occur to them, in the arrangement of the Institution.

ART. 9. — The annual meeting shall be held on the Second Wednesday in November, at which time the Officers and Board of Managers shall be elected.

ART. 10. — A committee of two gentlemen shall be chosen annually to audit the Treasurer's accounts.

ART. 11. — The Board shall meet quarterly from the period of the annual meeting at the Refuge. Seven shall constitute a quorum.

ART. 12. — Any amendments may be made in this Constitution at an annual meeting.

We have been requested to append to the Constitution the names of the first Officers and Managers of the Society.

Officers — chosen 1825.

Mrs. CATHARINE HAY, *President*.
 “ ANN McLEAN, *Vice President*.
 “ WILLIAM THURSTON, *Treasurer*.
 “ MARY L. O'BRIEN, *Secretary*.

Managers.

Send Mrs. ANN McLEAN,
 “ CATHARINE SCOLLAY,
 “ JONATHAN CARLETON,
 “ S. E. DWIGHT,
 “ WILLIAM ROPES,
 “ WILLIAM MINOT,

Mrs. HEMAN LINCOLN,
 “ RHODA JONES,
 “ EBEN. PARKER,
 “ HENRY HILL,
 “ ANN JONES,
 “ P. C. MORRIS.

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